

IN THE CLAIMS:

Claims 1-14 (canceled)

Claim 15 (new): A method of verifying and disabling a suspect vehicle, said method employing a central database station, a law enforcement unit associated with a law enforcement officer, and a vehicle control unit contained within the suspect vehicle, said method comprising the steps of:

- (a) the law enforcement officer observing the suspect vehicle;
- (b) the law enforcement officer transmitting an inquiry signal from the law enforcement unit to the vehicle control unit;
- (c) transmitting an identification code that is associated with the suspect vehicle, from the vehicle control unit in response to the inquiry signal;
- (d) receiving the identification code at the central database station, the identification code being associated with a first vehicle authorization code;
- (e) identifying the first vehicle authorization code associated with the identification code;
- (f) transmitting the first vehicle authorization code to the vehicle control unit;
- (g) in the vehicle control unit, comparing the first vehicle authorization code with a second vehicle authorization code pre-stored in the vehicle control unit;
- (h) generating an authorization acknowledgment at the suspect vehicle if there is a match between the first vehicle authorization code and the second vehicle authorization code;
- (i) enabling the vehicle control unit to receive a stop command signal if there is a match between the first vehicle authorization code and the second vehicle authorization code;
- (j) the law enforcement officer observing the authorization acknowledgment;
- (k) the law enforcement officer transmitting a stop command signal from the law enforcement unit in response to the authorization acknowledgment;
- (l) receiving the stop command signal at the vehicle control unit; and
- (m) disabling operation of the suspect vehicle in response to the stop command signal.

Claim 16 (new): The method of claim 15, wherein said step (d) includes using a lookup table to identify the vehicle authorization code from the received identification code.

Claim 17 (new): The method of claim 15, wherein said step (f) includes transmitting the vehicle authorization code to the law enforcement unit, and then transmitting the vehicle authorization code from the law enforcement unit to the vehicle control unit.

Claim 18 (new): The method of claim 15, wherein the suspect vehicle includes flasher lights, and wherein the authorization acknowledgement is realized by energizing the flasher lights.

Claim 19 (new): The method of claim 15, wherein said step (c) includes transmitting the identification code to the law enforcement unit.

Claim 20 (new): The method of claim 19, further comprising the step of transmitting the identification code from the law enforcement unit to the central database station.

Claim 21 (new): The method of claim 15, wherein said step (c) includes transmitting the identification code to the law enforcement unit.

Claim 22 (new): The method of claim 15, further comprising the step of activating a horn in the suspect vehicle after receipt of the stop command signal by the vehicle control unit.

Claim 23 (new): The method of claim 22, further comprising the step of transmitting a reset signal from the law enforcement unit to the vehicle control unit to deactivate the horn.

Claim 24 (new): The method of claim 15, wherein the suspect vehicle has an engine and said step (m) includes putting the engine in an idle condition.

Claim 25 (new): The method of claim 15, further comprising the step of encrypting the transmission of the first vehicle authorization code to the vehicle control unit.

Claim 26 (new): The method of claim 15, further comprising the step of encrypting the second vehicle authorization code before storing it in the vehicle control unit.

Claim 27 (new): The method of claim 15, wherein said step (i) includes enabling the vehicle control unit to receive the stop command signal for a pre-determined period.

Claim 28 (new): The method of claim 27, wherein the pre-determined period has a duration of up to 35 seconds.

Claim 29 (new): The method of claim 15, further comprising the step of transmitting a reset signal from the law enforcement unit to the vehicle control unit to re-enable operation of the suspect vehicle after being disabled in said step (m).

Claim 30 (new): The method of claim 15, wherein the suspect vehicle is an automobile.

Claim 31 (new): A method of verifying and disabling a suspect vehicle observed by a law enforcement officer, said method employing a central database station and a law enforcement unit associated with the law enforcement officer, said method comprising the steps of:

- (a) the law enforcement officer observing the suspect vehicle within a transmitting and receiving range of the law enforcement unit;
- (b) the law enforcement officer transmitting an inquiry signal from the law enforcement unit within the transmitting and receiving range;
- (c) the law enforcement unit receiving a plurality of identification codes from a plurality of vehicles, respectively, within the transmitting and receiving range, each of the identification codes being associated with a different one of the plurality of vehicles, each of the plurality of vehicles containing a vehicle control unit, the identification codes being transmitted from the vehicle control units to the law enforcement unit in response to the inquiry signal, the suspect vehicle being one of the plurality of vehicles;
- (d) relaying the identification codes of the plurality of vehicles from the law enforcement unit to the central database station, each of the identification codes being associated with a different vehicle authorization code stored at the central database station;
- (e) identifying the vehicle authorization codes associated with the identification codes, respectively;

- (f) transmitting the vehicle authorization codes from the central database station to the law enforcement unit;
- (g) displaying a list of the plurality of vehicles on a display screen for viewing by the law enforcement officer;
- (h) selecting one of the plurality of vehicles listed on the display screen;
- (i) transmitting the vehicle authorization code associated with the vehicle selected in step (h), from the law enforcement unit to the vehicle control unit of the selected vehicle;
- (j) comparing the vehicle authorization code transmitted in step (i) with a vehicle authorization code pre-stored in the vehicle control unit of the selected vehicle;
- (k) generating an authorization acknowledgment at the selected vehicle if there is a match between the transmitted vehicle authorization code and the vehicle authorization code pre-stored in the selected vehicle;
- (l) enabling the vehicle control unit of the selected vehicle to receive a stop command signal if there is a match between the transmitted vehicle authorization code and the vehicle authorization code pre-stored in the selected vehicle;
- (m) the law enforcement officer observing the authorization acknowledgment and verifying whether the selected vehicle is the suspect vehicle;
- (n) repeating steps (h) through (m) with respect to a different one of the plurality of vehicles listed on the display screen, until the selection of the suspect vehicle is verified in step (m);
- (o) the law enforcement officer transmitting a stop command signal from the law enforcement unit in response to an authorization acknowledgment from the suspect vehicle;
- (p) receiving the stop command signal at the vehicle control unit of the suspect vehicle;
and
- (q) disabling operation of the suspect vehicle in response to the stop command signal.

Claim 32 (new): The method of claim 31, wherein each of the plurality of vehicles includes flasher lights, and wherein the authorization acknowledgement of step (k) is realized by energizing the flasher lights.

Claim 33 (new): The method of claim 31, further comprising the step of activating a horn in the suspect vehicle after the vehicle control unit receives the stop command signal.

Claim 34 (new): The method of claim 31, wherein the suspect vehicle has an engine and said step (q) includes putting the engine in an idle condition.